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ABSTRACT

The paper examines practices and procedures that are seen as contributory to disproportionate placement of Black and Hispanic students in special education programs and discusses various components of the Boston Public School's Remedial Plan. Practices and procedures critical in disproportionate placement are seen to include biased assessment, problems with accountability, racism/racist attitudes, the concept of special education as a dumping ground, inappropriate referrals of minorities to special education as a result of Massachusetts Law Chapter 766 and its relationship to desegregation, and school system/administrative support. Seven components of the Remedial Plan are reported: (1) entrance and exit criteria; (2) prereferral; (3) biracial/bicultural review of resource room students who spend from 25% to 60% of the day in a special education setting; (4) generic specialist (consulting teacher) model; (5) bilingual hiring; (6) parent communication; and (7) regular education alternative. Also described are programs within the seventh component--the "Schools without Failure" Project which provides students, parents, teachers, and administrators a positive model of behavioral interventions which stresses individual responsibility for behavior; the Instructional Support Program which services elementary and middle school teachers and develops skills in informal diagnosis, evaluation, teaching strategies, classroom management, and individualization; and the Parent Information/Assistance Resource Project which provides information and complaint process to parents of special needs students. (SB)

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Disproportionate Placement of Black and Hispanic Students in Special Education Programs

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Disproportionate Placement of Black and Hispanic Students in Special Education Programs

Under Massachusetts law section 6, G.L. 71 B, schools systems are legally mandated to provide equal education opportunities to all students regardless of race, color or creed. In addition, PL 94-142, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Massachusetts Law Chapter 766 require that students be placed in the least restrictive educational setting based on non-culturally biased assessment procedures. Chapter 71 B mandates school systems to develop a plan to rectify disproportionate placement. The Boston Public Schools in 1978, was found to have a disproportionate number of black and Hispanic students in special education programs. Boston Public Schools, with the help of external and internal agencies and experts, developed a remedial plan to address the issue. Compliance specialists were assigned to implement and develop a comprehensive plan of action for remediating the disproportionate situation.

The following components are addressed in the Boston Public Schools Remedial Plan:

1) The establishment of a set of entrance and exit criteria for special education students in self-contained classes for the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed.
2) The development of a computerized special education management information system.
3) The development of in-service training programs regarding regular education modifications to prevent unnecessary referrals to special education programs.
4) The guarantee of black and Hispanic representation at special education evaluation meetings of black and Hispanic students.
5) The implementation of a consulting teacher model in certain school buildings.
6) The establishment of a communication network for Hispanic parents: (The printing of a Spanish Parents' Guide on Special Education).

7) The formation of bilingual parent groups.

8) The development of a parent information and complaint system for parents of special needs students.

9) The strengthening of the relationship between special education and regular education (e.g. the analysis of suspension data, the writing of a Code of Discipline, Schools Without Failure-Reality Therapy Project, other federal projects, Parent Information Program).

10) A folder review of all special education students placed in self-contained classes for the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed by a task force of psychologists and special educators.

The focus of this presentation will be two-fold: 1) an examination of practices and procedures that are seen as contributory to disproportionate placement and 2) a discussion of various components of the Boston Public School's Remedial Plan. The current status with regard to disproportionate placement will also be explored.

Practices and Procedures Contributing to Disproportionate Placement

The following practices and procedures are considered by the Remedial Plan Project to be critical in the disproportionate placement of minority students in special education programs.

1) Biased Assessment. Prior to its Remedial Plan Boston had no established set of entrance and exit criteria for students placed in the most restrictive special education settings. Many special education decisions were arbitrarily determined by an evaluation team who had used biased assessments in their decision making. The presentation of biased assessments regarding a student with special needs and results of previously administered biased assessments that are part of a students record can result in inappropriate special education placement, particularly for minority students. In addition, members of the evaluation team are often white and may be unaware or unconscious of the

bias they contribute in their administered assessments. The use of uniform non-biased assessments is essential in rectifying this problem. Component I of the Remedial Plan addresses this concern.

2) Problems with Accountability. The accountability for placing minority students in the most restrictive special education classes has been limited. Although the State Department cited Boston for disproportionate placement, it is much easier to cite a system than the individual school or teacher as responsible for the number of special education referrals he/she makes. The development of a comprehensive data base system which can yield this type of information is a first step toward approaching accountability. Component II of Boston's Remedial Plan focuses on this issue.

3) Racism/Racist Attitudes. Racism can be reflected in a number of subtle practices. Lack of cultural awareness often results in overreferral or inappropriate referral of minorities to the most restrictive special education programs. There may also be more of a reluctance to maintain a minority special needs student in a regular education class than a white student. In addition many teachers honestly believe that they are serving their minority students more comprehensively by recommending them for special education programs. The softening of the effect of racial attitudes needs to be approached in a multi-faceted manner. The Remedial Plan addressed this issue by in-service and a subcommittee in cultural awareness. The major thrust of the plan was the integration of cultural awareness throughout all facets of the school system. It was felt that ownership for the plan would become part of the general practices and procedures of the school system. The purpose was not just to institute a project whose goals after its completion would be forgotten but to initiate activities that would become integral parts of the school system.

4) Special Education/a Dumping Ground. The conception of special education as the savior for all educational, social, and emotional problems has contributed to the disproportionate placement of minorities in special education programs. Under utilization of regular education alternatives, lack of problem-solving by regular educators, the traditional focus of guidance and psychological services and a heterogeneous math and reading curriculum all feed into the problem of over-referral for minorities.

Since reading is often the major reason for special education referral many minority students may be unnecessarily referred due to inconsistent curriculum. Students may move from one school to another because of busing in a desegregated school system, a family move, or the closing of schools due to budgetary constraints.

All of these factors aggravate the problem of overreferral to special education programs. Component IV and VI of the Boston's Remedial Plan concentrate on regular education alternatives that lead to decreased referrals for minority students to special education programs and establishes a consulting teacher model that attempts to support regular education teachers in maintaining students in the regular education class rather than referring them to special education programs.

5) The passage of the Massachusetts Law Chapter 766 and PL 94-142 and its relationship to desegregation.

The passage of Chapter 766 and its relationship to desegregation in the Boston Public Schools have often lead to inappropriate referrals of minorities to special education classes. Who is an appropriate referral, what type of service delivery is more effective, and where can new programs be located all need to be considered simultaneously with desegregation issues. The need for a new special education class may conflict with attempts to racially balance school buildings. Legal mandates of the courts often conflict in these instances when assignments to a particular school based on a special education need are contrary to desegregation concerns. These types

of issues need to be addressed on many levels in the future.

6) School System/Administrative Support. The effectiveness of the implementation of a remedial plan is directly related to the type of support the school system gives the plan. In Boston's case the superintendent gave full support to the plan and lent it the power and priority necessary for effective implementation. Without this type of support a remedial plan is weakened and lacks credibility in a system.

The particular components of the Remedial Plan highlighted in practices and procedures of the report will now be discussed.

Component I - Entrance and Exit Criteria

The concept of a non-biased criteria referenced assessment tool to determine entry and exit levels for students assigned to different special education prototypes was originally addressed by an Ad Hoc Task Force Subcommittee in their formulation of the Remedial Plan. The assignment for the Project during the first year, as mandated by the Remedial Plan, was the formulation and piloting of entrance and exit criteria for 502.4 L/AB and S.A.R. students (students placed in self-contained classes for emotionally disturbed and educable mentally retarded). In later years, entrance and exit criteria were to be developed for all special education prototypes.

Initially, the Project hired outside consultants (psychologists) recommended by members of the Ad Hoc Task Force for the Remedial Plan. Although the outside consultants offered the Project some insight into the multi-faceted aspects of the Remedial Plan, they were unwilling to address the development of entrance and exit criteria.

To tackle the development of appropriate criteria, the Project formed a working subcommittee. Members of the 502.4 L/AB and S.A.R. Criteria Subcommittee included an outside consulting minority psychologist, and a Boston Hispanic psychologist, a Bilingual Hispanic Liaison Teacher for resource rooms, both the 502.4 S.A.R. and L/AB Program Specialists, the Director of Special Schools and Programs and project staff (a minority special educator and an educational psychologist).

An initial task of this group was a thorough analysis of PL 94-142 definitions "retardation and emotional disturbance". These analyses served both as guidelines and baseline data in the formulation of the criteria.

In addition, the project staff reviewed a variety of published criteria assessment tools. Results of this research were shared with the 502.4 Criteria Subcommittee. The group felt that any criteria developed should avoid the use of negative labels. For example, many published criteria used terms such as "poor attention span, hyperactivity" etc. The criteria developed by the Criteria Subcommittee avoids negative terms and states the criteria in neutral terms. For example, some of the terms used in the developed criteria include attention span, level of activity, etc. which hopefully free the criteria from negative loading. The elimination of a bias effect is a more plausible outcome using criteria without built in negative connotations.

Another consideration in developing a set of valid and reliable criteria was to include items that duplicated each other in content to allow for an internal consistency check for each person completing the criteria.

After the initial criteria were written, the draft was shared with Boston teachers (special education, regular education, bilingual), and psychologists as well as the Ad Hoc Task Force for the Remedial Plan. A revised draft of criteria based on this input was piloted in the Boston Public Schools in late March through June, 1980 after in-servicing Evaluation Team Leaders, Self-Contained Classroom Teachers, Selected Resource Room Teachers and parents in Boston. Because of the small sample that completed the criteria during this period, data collected was insufficient in size to compute a valid item analysis and establish realiability scores.

A piloting continued in Boston Public Schools during the 1980-81 school year and provides a sufficient data base to allow for appropriate analysis. The additional piloting in Boston Public Schools helped provide an even broader data base.

In addition to an English version of the criteria, an Hispanic version is also

available. An adapted parental version is available in English and in Spanish.

Component II - Data Base System and In-service to Prereferral

Component II of the Remedial Plan mandated the development of a Management Information System which could supply principals and administrators with enrollment statistics for their school on a regular basis.

The Boston Public Schools hired a Senior Programmer in January, 1980. The Senior Programmer position was incorporated into the broader Systems Analyst position.

Work on an interim plan to meet the Special Needs Information System requirements began while the implementation of the Data Base System was in the planning stage. The project plan for this system should be completed by the end of March, 1981. The plan will explain the system design (files, programs, screens, reports), the start-up tasks such as data collection, training, final terminal installation which will be required to get the system going, and the suggested timetable for both systems development and start-up activities. The project completion date for the new system is June, 1981.

Boston is committed to implementing a data base management which will capture data for all Boston Public School students, including special needs data, on one central file.

The Data Base Management System remains a priority of the Remedial Plan Project, and will help increase accountability for minority students placed in special education programs.

Component II - Prereferral

Component II also required in-service for school personnel in the area of the prereferral process. The prereferral area is an important area in preventing needless referrals to Special Education. It was believed that Special Education was being filled by students who could very appropriately remain in the mainstream of educational life. Many educators, some with the very best of intentions, felt that they did not have the skills to meet the needs of their students. These educators also felt that special

education was the only hope for a student. They did not realize that mainstream education is a right of students and that regular education has a responsibility to provide mainstream education for all students whenever possible.

The Superintendent's Office approved Release Time for school personnel in September, October and January to address special needs issues, particularly prereferral. Additionally, each district provided prereferral in-service to Evaluation Team Leaders. All schools had perreferral in-service. The entire 1979-80 school year was filled with monthly reference to prereferral process and its relevance to the Over/Under Representation issue.

The basic problem with prereferral and reduced referrals to special education is indigenous to all urban school systems. There is little incentive to maintain students who are experiencing education, social, or emotional difficulty in the regular education setting. It is easier to make a referral than to modify a program. Urban education is a challenging and demanding field. Special Education is an easy available option which can reduce the demands of the regular classroom. It is a logical option since special educators have specialized training and experience and a reduced class size. Chapter 766 mandates an automatic referral to special education for poor attendance, suspension, or academic difficulties. The Project feels that the money spent for many mildly/moderately handicapped students to be placed in special education might better be spent to provide incentives to regular education:

- monetary salary payments to teachers who can maintain previously identified special needs students in regular education
- opening up small school buildings to meet the learning style of students who require a small, personalized educational setting for their educational growth
- reducing regular education class sizes
- State monitoring of pre-service training programs for teachers to ensure that anyone who the State certifies for teaching in the Commonwealth has some background in

- program modification
- cultural differences and its impact on education
- parent communication skills

There should be a basic concern as to the amount of in-service training a school system must provide due to a lack of adequate training by teacher institutions, colleges and universities.

One of the best training devices was the Student Support Team. The SST was a technique by which regular and special educators worked together to address students' needs. The Program was established in:

103 elementary schools

74 of the schools participated in an intensive two day workshop

28 additional schools received training materials and training by Generic Teachers. The SS Team is a mandatory prereferral process which helps teachers to help children.

The Student Support Team combined with administrative support and backing looks to be a promising method for ensuring legitimate special education referrals.

Component III - Biracial/Bicultural Review of 502.3 Students (Resource Room Students who spend from 25% to 60% of time during the day in a Special Education Setting)

A special review of 502.3 students was conducted by outside consultants and school personnel. All black and Hispanic students in overrepresented schools had a professional of the same race attend his/her review. Outside consultants (psychologists and educators) served in the role of silent observers in the evaluation meetings for selected students. Some of the following are pertinent findings of the eight consultants.

- In only 50% of the 502.3 (resource room) reviews were less restrictive programs considered
- Only in 50% of the cases did school personnel indicate knowledge of other alternative evaluation programs
- In 75% of the cases, the school was the first place where problems were identified

- In 60% of the cases quarterly progress reports were complete
- The predominant number of children in 502.3 programs were 2-4 years behind in academic areas but only 12% lagged 1 or more years behind in social skills.

Results of the outside consultants findings might be analyzed in several ways. More emphasis on practical ways to assist personnel in altering special education placements to the least restrictive environment is needed. Concrete plans of what would be needed for less restrictive environments needs to be generated and examined closely at each review meeting. More communication on alternatives available both in the building, and at district level needs to be made more readily available to all school personnel.

Most positive in the outside consultants findings is the general agreement (75%) with the team's decision and the sensitivity to cultural awareness reflected at all the meetings. These findings may reveal the importance of minority representatives at each meeting, the growing cultural awareness in the schools, as well as knowledgeable 766 decisions.

The project in this component also ensured that all minority 502.3 reviews in overrepresented schools had an appropriate minority representative involved in the review. Findings of these eight minority participants indicated that in 99% of cases all 766 (PL 94-142) regulations were being met. These findings reveal some of the positive effects that programs such as "Schools Without Failure", and other in-service training may be having on school personnel.

341 502.3 minority students were reviewed

239 or 70% remained in a 502.3 prototype

56 or 16.4% were moved to a 502.2 prototype (less restrictive environment)

7 or 2% were moved to a 502.1 prototype (less restrictive environment)

Recommendations of the project include the following suggestions. Every 502.3 review of a minority student should have a person of the same race on the team. In

overrepresented schools 502.3 prototype decisions might be determined at the district level. Additionally, more in-service training or less restrictive programming may also be needed.

The result of the outside consultants, underscores some of the positive aspects of the 766 process in Boston even from an outside perspective.

Component IV - Generic Specialist Model (Consulting Teacher Model)

This year (1979-80), Boston made a commitment to the generic specialist model in 28 schools. The training of generic teachers under ESAA grants with (Regis, Simmons and Boston College) in the previous 3 years provided a pool of appropriately trained special education teachers to serve in this role. Although some teachers had functioned unofficially in this role for years, the School Committee's vote to approve the generic model served to legitimize the role of consultation and indirect service in special education.

Since the role of generic special educator is only a year old in Boston, any data that is analyzed pertinent to the model should be approached in a cautious manner.

In the end of the year report on the generic model, there was no reported change in attitudes of regular educators who had negative attitudes toward mainstreaming, while regular education teachers supportive of mainstreaming became even more supportive.

Other findings include data that although regular educators utilize special education skills and techniques, their knowledge of these areas is not always extensive.

The generic teachers reported a slight increase in consultation activities since January of 1980.

With regard to the issue of over-representation, although more black and Hispanics were placed by their teachers in the prereferral and referral stage, the percentage of blacks and Hispanic learners placed in special education as a result of a new referral, decreased. In the same period between January and June, the percentage of Hispanic learners reduced in prototypes increased, the percentage of black learners decreased, and the percentage of white learners remained the same. An analysis of this trend

reveals, that the generic role has impacted on the referral and prereferral process, but not significantly in prototype reduction.

In conclusion, the first year pilot of the generic model indicates promising trends. The positive effect on special needs programs is most clearly demonstrated in the referral and prereferral stages.

The problem of adequate time for consultation remains a concern for generic teachers. However, it should be noted that at the statewide conference on the generic model held at Regis College this year, the dominant position of most school systems with regard to consultation time is similar to Boston's. Generic teachers, particularly at the elementary school level consult before and after school and during lunch time. With the reality of tight budgetary constraints in most school systems, and the newness of the generic model across the State, sufficient time for consultation will probably remain a concern for generic teachers. However, if one looks at the impact of 1-2 hours of consultation time a week, the reduction at the referral and prereferral stages of students referred for special education programs is impressive. Would more consultation time significantly decrease to a greater extent students referred to special education? And would the increase from 30% to 32% reduction justify the additional teacher cost required to increase this consultation time? How many hours of consultation is necessary in a week? These questions concernings consultation time still need to be addressed.

The remainder of the report in this component will focus on the Project's response to the generic model, particularly its impact on the over/under representation issue.

The viability of the generic model should be looked at in a larger context. The retooling of regular educators in special education techniques and skills is easier to effect than attitudinal change. The generic model seems to reflect effective interventions in reducing the number of minority referrals and prereferrals that culminate in placement in special education programs. However, the reduction of

prototypes for blacks already placed in special education programs is still not occurring, even in schools with the generic model. This might indicate the newness of the generic model in schools or the emphasis this year on new minority referrals or pre-referrals in the school. It may also indicate the need for regular educators and principals to become more sensitized to the cultural differences of their students. The generic model to be most effective for minorities needs to function in an overall atmosphere of teacher and principal receptivity and awareness of cultural differences. In addition reduction of prototypes of students already placed in special education is probably most easily effected by more communication between regular and special education teachers, revised regular education curriculums (particularly at the high school level) and more focus on the adaptation of regular education curriculum at the junior high and high school level for students of special needs.

The generic model seems a viable one, but needs to work in conjunction with other models that help teachers to serve students more broadly and effectively in the least restrictive environment.

Component V & VI - Bilingual Issues

Based on June 14, 1980 systemwide figures there are 8,266 Hispanic students in the Boston Public Schools. Hispanic students comprise 12.41% of the student population in Boston. Hispanic students represent 8.78% of the 502.1 prototype population; 12.6% of the 502.2 prototype population; 11.8% of the 502.3 prototype population; 6.4% of the 502.4 L/AB population; 13.8% of the 502.4 S.A.R. population; 3.1% of the 502.5 prototype population and 2.3% of the 502.6 prototype population.

On a systemwide basis there is no disproportionate representation of Hispanic students in special education prototypes. This equalization was not the situation when the Boston Public Schools were first cited by the State Department of Education under G.L. 71B. Because of the disproportionate representation in some school buildings the components of the Remedial Plan dealing with Hispanic issues remain a priority for

the Project.

The Bilingual Special Education Coordinator, identified two key areas which must remain as important issues for the Project: bilingual hiring and parent communication. As a result of the coordinator's recommendations: as of September 12, 1980 there was

44 Bilingual Resource Rooms

17 Bilingual Substantially Separate Rooms

2 Early Childhood Programs

There is presently a Bilingual Spanish Evaluation Team Leader and an opening for another Bilingual ETL to be filled this Fall. Some of the other ETL openings will also be held for minorities. There are three Bilingual Psychologists, and a fourth Spanish Speaking Psychologist will be nominated by the Superintendent. Four Pupil Adjustment Counselors will be hired this Fall. There are three Bilingual Spanish Speaking Therapists. Eight- thousand dollars has been approved for translation services. There are two Bilingual Liaison Teachers. Connections (a Special Education Services Directory) will be available in seven languages.

The Over/Under Representation Remedial Plan Project funded the printing of 2,000 Spanish copies of the Connections booklet for parents. They were distributed to the parents of all Spanish speaking special needs students and numerous Boston agencies.

The bilingual coordinator will work closely with the Parent Information Project during the coming school year. Monthly meetings are planned with parent groups. Each Parent Newsletter will be translated into Spanish for a total of 10 editions during the school year.

Component VII - Regular Education Alternative

The Individual Criterion Referenced Test (ICRT) was developed in Boston to provide teachers with a diagnostic instructional tool. Meetings between members of the Department of Curriculum and Competency were on-going this year. The initial basis of communication was the sharing of information between the Department of Curriculum and

Competency and the Remedial Plan Project concerning relevant on-going activities

The decision as to how special needs students would be involved in both the ICRT and competency based testing needed to be determined. The possible ramifications of the ICRT and competency based testing for minority special needs students was of particular importance to the Project.

The Project was part of a committee, beginning last May, 1980 and which will be continuing in the present school year 1980-81, whose task was the development of guidelines for special needs students with regard to their involvement in ICRT.

The committee using guidelines developed by The Commissioner of Education developed a draft that addresses the relationship of special needs students to the ICRT. The draft is an initial response to the issue of how special needs students will be involved in both the ICRT and competency based testing. The committee will continue to meet throughout the year to work on this task.

Component VII - Schools Without Failure/Behavior Management

The "Schools Without Failure" Project provides a viable alternative in effecting a decrease of school suspensions. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators involved in any of the phases of this training model are taught a positive model of behavioral interventions which stresses individual responsibility for behavior. It is an action oriented, planning model which encourages individual responsibility.

The strength of this model is its involvement with students, staff and parents in individual schools. The approach is to address problems at all levels in the school environment.

Impact of this model in schools has resulted in reduced racial tension, more positive feelings of teachers and administrators toward their students, and decreased suspensions.

Plans that are most promising and that will be expanded in the 1980-81 school year are the student leadership and parent involvement program.

Component VII D - District VI Instructional Support Program (ISP)

The Instructional Support Program is funded by Chapter 636 money and is pairing between the University of Massachusetts (Boston) and District VI (a district in Boston). The Collaborative Project consists of:

- the Instructional Support Program
- a Multicultural Program
- a Resource Center
- Parent Evaluations

The Instructional Support Program services elementary and middle school teachers and develops skills in informal diagnosis, evaluation, teaching strategies, classroom management and individualization. Additionally, certain students who may be referred for special education services are provided with parent or university tutors in order to to assure the appropriate services can be provided to the student. The number of students served by the ISP total 608 - 242 black, 256 white and 110 other.

The District VI pairing also provides participating teachers with a six credit University of Massachusetts graduate course. The goals of the course work are to improve the staffs knowledge of instructional techniques, classroom management practices, and use of multicultural curriculum. It is hoped that ISP would improve parents knowledge of students and school activities.

In addition, the Over/Under Representation Remedial Plan Project sought to see if the District VI schools which participated in the Project would have fewer referrals to Chapter 766 services that non-participating schools.

Generally, it was found that schools which participated in the Instructional Support Program referred 10% or less of its total student enrollment to special education programs. Schools which did not participate in the ISP referred 10% or more of its total student enrollment to special education programs.

The District VI Instructional Support Program is an example of a successful University pairing. It supplements services provided to the students and staff in

the District. The evaluator

- conducted on-site observations and interviews and
- distributed questionnaires to staff and students.

At the Middle School level teachers felt that the program had improved their diagnostic skills and instructional resources.

The evaluator's report also points out that another important aspect of the ISP is the impact on school integration.

Component VII F - Parent Information/Assistance Resource Project

The Parent Information Assistance and Resource Project began March 7, 1980. The Project has met with Community Superintendents and District Coordinators of Student Support Resources for each of the nine districts on an individual basis, various parent groups, community agencies and Evaluation Team Leaders in order to:

1. Increase parent knowledge and awareness of various topics encompassed under PL 94-142, Chapter 766, Section 504.
2. Increase parent awareness information and involvement about Special Needs Programs and Services.
3. Raise community awareness about BPS programs, services, special events.
4. Develop a complaint management, information network.

During the 1980-81 school year, the Parent Information Project will extend its contact with parent groups. The Project will assist in the formation of a Special Needs Subcommittee for CPAC (Citywide Parent Advisory Council). They will also continue to interface with the broad CPAC organization.

The Project has plans to use interns from Boston State College, Boston University, Roxbury Community College and Lesley College for the purpose of increasing the office intake capacity. The interns will receive college credit and valuable work experience. Additionally their participation will allow the project staff more time in the field as opposed to office duties. Some interns may be Hispanic. The project staff is also

soliciting resumes from Hispanic individuals for an office secretarial position. The position is posted at all the Hispanic agencies, Roxbury Community College, and the CPAC Newsletter.

The Parent Information Project adds a valuable and needed dimension to the Department of Student Support Services.

The purpose of the Parent Information Assistance and Resource Project is to provide a consistent and organized information and complaint process to parents of Special Needs Students. The PIARP ensures that any problems noted by parents are addressed swiftly and appropriately. The Project also prepares and disseminates a monthly Department of Student Support Resources Newsletter.

Current Status

Boston Public Schools was cited by the State Department in October of 1978 and October 1979 for overrepresentation in the 502.3 prototype. The current status systemwide for all special education categories using the agreed upon formula of the Boston Public Schools and the State Department of Education indicates that systemwide Boston no longer appears to be overrepresented. Although we have not received to date the State Department's findings for the current year, 1980-81, certain schools remain overrepresented in the 502.3 prototype.

The Remedial Plan has continued with many of the activities initiated in the first year of the Project as well as expanded into other areas. Entrance and exit criteria were developed in 1979-80 and a year long piloting is underway in Districts II and III in the current year. The criteria address the problem of non-biased assessment and hopefully will provide clear guidelines for the entrance and exit of students into 502.4 classes. The continued involvement of the Project in the development and implementation of a centralized data base information system is a major thrust of this year's Remedial Plan. In addition all schools that are overrepresented in the 502.3 prototype are providing for appropriate minority representation at all reviews for minority students placed in the 502.3 prototypes. Another major focus of this year's plan is investigating and working with generic teachers to increase 502.1 special education program delivery for minority students. The expansion of parent outreach for special needs bilingual students is an on-going process this year. Parent Newsletters in 6 languages, efforts to create viable bilingual special needs parent groups, and increased translation capacity are all efforts to increase communication and service to the special needs bilingual population. The investigation and dissemination of regular education alternatives that impact on the reduction of minority referrals is an area in which a subcommittee of the Remedial Plan is strongly involved. The re-evaluation recommended for 502.4 L/AB and S.A.R. students by last years 502.4 Task Force are being closely followed. Turning the attention of the State Department to discrimination practices

in the private sector has also been initiated this year. The Project has also established subcommittees of central, district and school level professionals and parents who are addressing particular issues in the Remedial Plan (502.4 follow-up, cultural awareness, regular education alternatives, parent outreach, and a conference on disproportionate placement). The Remedial Plan this year is also committed to the sharing of information with other systems concerning the plan's effort. A conference in May, 1981 sponsored by the Boston Public School will include the New England area and other large eastern urban centers and will focus upon the different issues pertinent to disproportionate placement.